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ABSTRACT

A slide presentation examines the decisionmaking process behind whether a community should renovate their older school facilities or abandon them for new facilities. Three factors to be considered in this decision are addressed and involve the school's location, the history of the school, and the relationship of the school to the community and the opportunities the older school affords. Each factor is examined and examples of school design are provided, including modifying double loaded corridors to provide resource areas and clustering learners to promote collaboration. (Contains 12 PowerPoint slide printouts.) (GR)

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Renovating Older Schools

Reusing Older Schools PDF

Presented as part of a public session titled "Schools for the 21st Century" at the 1999 American Society of Heating Refrigeration and Air-conditioning Engineers National Meeting in Seattle, Washington on June 21, 1999

What follows is a transcription of the presentation. Click to see the actual PowerPoint Slide Show.

Introduction

Many communities face the decision of whether to renovate their older school facilities or abandon them for new facilities. While the cost of renovation versus new facilities is an important factor, it should not be the determining factor. Three other factors are as important and should be considered to make this decision: the location, the history and the community relationship and opportunities the older school affords.

The location is important to consider in terms of the educational opportunities that a central location affords. Many older schools are within walking distance of a central business district or governmental and other public facilities. With learning concepts heading more toward project-based learning, co-operative learning and ultimately creating learning communities, this proximity to other potential sites for learning and the sharing of resources, i.e. recreational facilities, learning at local business sites, internships and off school site instruction, becomes valuable.

The history of the school also plays an important role in the decision to keep or abandon an older school. Important events in the life of the community, both positive and negative, have more than likely happened at the school. Groups of people have met and made lifelong associations at a school based on common places experienced. Invariably, the school is linked to past association and memories of a community and those memories are tied to a building and a place. Institutions in a community, such as a school, must consider the quality of place as a part of their institution's stature within a community.

The relationship of a school to a community must also be considered. The school may play a role in the community to provide a meeting ground for neighbors of different social and economic class. The school might also act as symbol of pride for a neighborhood, promoting the vitality of that neighborhood. Removing a school from a neighborhood or town may decrease the involvement of neighbors in their community. Without common purpose and forums for discussion, neighborhoods have a hard time organizing against crime, undesirable uses and public nuisances. The results could be the loss of property values and a sense of decline for the neighborhood.

Renovating older schools to facilitate new approaches to learning is certainly not an easy task, but it is not an impossible task either. As shown in the presentation, double loaded corridors can be modified to provide resource areas and cluster learners to promote collaboration. The critical question to determine the relationship between the school and community. Only when a direction for learning for the entire community is made can an appropriate environment be created anew or reinvigorated from an older building.

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REUSING OLDER SCHOOLS WORKSHOP

It's quite a pleasure to speak to you all to day, especially to a group of design professionals and school administrators who I know I personally have much experience with designing new schools, and repairing and adding on to older schools across the state. It is also good to know that I and my co-workers at the Department of Archives and History have a great working relationship with many of the architects and firms represented in this room, and that working together we have successfully completed many historic school projects, ranging from elementary through collegiate type facilities built over the last 100 years or so. So if I feel today if I'm not preaching to the choir, but rather to the preachers themselves, you will forgive me in covering some of the fundamentals about our department and the role it plays in Mississippi are preserved for future generations while remaining state of the art with regard to function, technology, life safety, and energy and maintenance concerns. I mean my talk to be informal and a dialogue of sorts among everyone here today, so please don't hesitate to comment or raise a question during the course of my presentation. I trust we will be able to have many opportunities to talk throughout the day as part of this workshop.

As my undergraduate degree was in American history, the historian in me always wants to start from the beginning. Thus, when we speak of early education in Mississippi, before and for some time after statehood, by and large education was in the domain of private tutors and academies. This was especially true in the more populated and prosperous areas of Mississippi, centered around the Old Nachez District. The Department of Archives and History operates and interprets Historic Jefferson College just outside of Natchez. It was chartered in 1802 by the Territorial Assembly, and as you can see from a period engraving and a recent photo, has changed remarkably little over the last 200 years. (**L, R**)

Other groups, including fraternal lodges, built there own schools in more isoloated portions of the state, such as the Eureka Masonic College in rural Holmes County, dating to the 1840's, seen here on the left. Parochial educational institutions were not far behind, as represented by St. Francis

Xavier Convent and School in Vicksburg, founded in the late 1850's and seen here on the right. This marvelous complex contains buildings in both the Greek Revival and Gothic Revival styles of architecture built on an entire city block. Early benefactors of the school included both Joseph Davis and his younger brother Jefferson, who owned plantations nearby. (**L, R**)

In the late nineteenth century, as the Industrial Revolution gained a toehold in Mississippi, a few milltowns sprung up such as Tupelo, Stonewall, and Wesson, primarily for the production of textiles. The Old Wesson School, circa 1890, understandably took on the factory form of other buildings in the mill complex, with it imposing stairtowers and banks of windows. Presently vacant, but in good condition, it is an entirely unique resource in Mississippi. (**L, R**)

The beginning of the 20th century ushered in a wave of stylistic eclecticism that was to last for nearly half a century. East Ward Elementary School in Gulfport, on the left, was designed in so-called Prairie Style, characterized by brooding overhanging eaves and banks of windows side-by-side, which emphasized the horizontality of the structure. Frank Lloyd Wright was an early proponent of this style. Architects designing educational facilities at this time were not operating in a vacuum, and the same stylistic qualities could be seen in other buildings for the same period such as in the Schlenker House in Vicksburg, almost exactly contemporaneous with the school in Gulfport. (**L, R)**

One of the most popular architectural styles for educational buildings built in the 1920's and 1930's was the Tudor Revival. A variation on the English Gothic Style that first developed in the 15th century, architects, educators, and ordinary citizens viewed the Tudor Revival Style as embodying the virtues of learning and of permanence. The style was even more popular for university buildings during this time, so much so that it came to be known as Collegiate Gothic, and entire Tudor Revival campuses sprang up, including, the University of Chicago and Yale University. Here we see on the left from the gatehouse to Hampton court Palace in London, built for King Henry VIII around 1520, and on the right the Old Central High School in Jackson, Mississippi's pre-eminent example of the style. The twin turrets, arched windows, and use of stone and brick detailing were all employed by architect C.H. Lindsley to masterful effect. We will look at Central High

again in a few minutes as an example of adaptive reuse of a historic school building. (**L, R**)

Other fine examples of the Tudor Revival style include Crystal Springs High School, constructed in 1928, on the left, and on the right, a superb Tudor Revival mansion in Jackson from the same time period. (**L, R**)

Other architectural styles were popular, though not as common, during this time, including the Spanish Colonial and so-called Mediterranean Styles, which shared qualities such as clay tile roofs, picturesque massing, and exteriors which are usually stuccoed. The Rosedale Consolidates School in Bolivar County on the left is considered to be one of the two finest examples of the Spanish Colonial Style in Mississippi. Our office affectionately calls it the "Alamo of the Delta", and I am happy to report that it will be rehabilitated in the near future under the direction of architect Tommy Mills, here with us today. Significant detailing includes an arched opening, seen on the right (**L, R**) as well as intricate tile work and Art Deco light standards at the main entrance. (**L, R**)

Another fine example of this style is the old Bay St. Louis High School, seen here on the left, and its residential counterpart found in Jackson, which combines arched openings, stuccoed walls, asymmetrical massing, and a clay tile roof to great effect. (**L, R).**

The Art Deco Style developed in France in the 1920's, and became widely popular on this side of the Atlantic as well, influencing the design of everything from the Chrysler Building in New York to every day items such as toasters and radios. Strong angles, crisp massing, and the integration of artwork into public school buildings were all hallmarks of the style. Noah Webster Overstreet, perhaps Mississippi's greatest and most prolific architect of the 20th century, immediately adopted the style and became a master as using it, as evidenced by the Church Street School in Tupelo. Here, poured-in-place concrete allowed Overstreet to mass his building powerfully with setbacks and curvilinear elements. (**L, R**) And always, artwork is in evidence, including low relief panels on the exterior, portraying aspects of Mississippi history and culture. Even the wall over a water fountain is enlivened with a sculpture of a fisherman and a dolphin. (**L, R**)

The High School Auditorium in Senatobia on the left is another fine art Deco building, and even incorporates a sundial in the area above the central

door.
On the right we see Columbia High School, designed by Overstreet, which incorporates glass block, tower-like elements, and curving forms. An abstracted and stripped down version of Art Deco Style, and the school won international acclaim and was written up in architecture magazines in France and Finland at the time of its completion. (**L, R**)

Bomar Avenue Elementary School in Vicksburg is another high distinctive International Style facility, with stylized lettering as a freestanding sculptural group marking the main entrance. (**L, R**)
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With that brief overview on the history and stylistic evolution of school buildings on Mississippi, my main purpose for being here today is to tell you about one of the programs administered by The Department of Archives and History and the Mississippi Landmark Program. The State Antiquities Law, passed the legislature and adopted in 1970, affirmed Mississippi's interest in locating, protecting, and preserving historic properties. These properties, which include sites, objects, and buildings of historical, archaeological, or architectural significance, are identified in the laws as "Mississippi Landmarks". The Antiquities Law Places the responsibility of implementing the law on the Board of Trustees of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. The Board has established a Permit Committee, composed of the Department director and professional staff at the Department's Division of Historic Preservation, to designate properties as Mississippi Landmarks and to review any proposed changes to these properties. This process insures that Mississippi's historic, architectural, and cultural heritages are preserved for future generations. Presently, more than 600 Mississippi Landmarks have been designated, and include town halls, fire stations, courthouses, libraries, university and other school buildings, and water works, among the tyoes of buildings listed.

Properties eligible to become Mississippi Landmarks include non-federal, publicly-owed buildings belonging to the state, counties, municipalities, or other political subdivisions that have architectural and/or historic significance.

The process of becoming a Mississippi Landmark begins when a property is identified as eligible for Mississippi Landmark status and is officially placed "under consideration." The owner of the property is then identified and

given opportunity to comment on the possible designation of the property. Public comment is also solicited through a legal notice in the local newspaper. The comment period is thirty days. At its next meeting after the comment period, the Permit Committee considers any comments received and takes formal action on the designation of the property as a Mississippi Landmark. The Mississippi Landmark designation is then recorded in the deed records of the appropriate count's Chancery Clerk office as a perpetual preservation easement.

Mississippi Landmark status means that any proposed work that could affect the historical or architectural character of a property is subject to review by the Permit Committee. Property owners are required to notify The Permit Committee in the early planning stage, and always prior to the letting of bids, of proposed projects that may affect designated or potential Mississippi Landmarks. This is an important point, because some buildings may have reached50 years of age and have architectural or historical importance but have not yet been landmarked. A building's landmark status may always be determined by contacting the Review and Compliance Officer at the Department of Archives and History at 601-359-6940. If we do not have sufficient information on the building in our files to make a determination, we may ask the owner or the architect to supply us with the representative interior and exterior photographs and whatever they know about the building's age, architect, alterations, etc.

A one-page Notice of Intent Form (**HOLD UP GRAY FORM**) is the only paperwork that must be submitted for a Mississippi Landmark review in addition to the normal architectural plans and specifications. Staff members of the Division of Historic Preservation are always available to work with public officials, architects, and engineers to assure compliance with the Antiquities Law. There is no charge for this service.

A scenario of an ideal Mississippi Landmark would be as follows. Once a determination was made that a building was landmarked or eligible to be landmarked, the design professional would schedule a site visit with Archive's staff where the scoop of work and recommended treatments for various aspects of the project could hopefully be worked out. This should take place no later than the programming or schematic phase of design. The architect or engineer would continue to send a copy of plans and specs at each subsequent stage of design to Archives for comment, just as they would to the client or using agency. When finalized Construction Documents are

ready, the designer would send those along with the Notice of Intent form for a final review. Archives staff would look at the design package, and respond within thirty days as to whether the proposed work is approved as submitted. Review times may be shortened if Archives has been included in the design process from the beginning. If all aspects of the project are approved, a formal permit would then be executed between the building owner and Archives.

In judging the appropriateness of proposed work, incidentally Archives reviews both interior and exterior work, the Permit Committee has adopted the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation **(L, R) (HOLD UP)** as their official guidelines. You will find a short version of the Standards in the handouts, as well as information on how to obtain the illustrated Standards through the National Park Service's Web page. These federal standards, originally developed for reviewing HUD projects in the 1960's, pertain to historic buildings of all materials, construction types, sites, and occupancy, and encompasses the exterior and interior of historic buildings. A definition of the word rehabilitation is important at this point. It refers to the process of returning a property to a state of utility, through repair or alteration, which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions and features of the property which are significant to its historical, architectural, and cultural values. Many of you are already familiar with the Standards.

Common issues involving the Standards which arise frequently include:

(L, R) Masonry Repair. 19th and early 20th century brickwork usually exhibited a very high degree of craftsmanship, some of which is nearly impossible to replicate today.
(L, R) Exterior masonry cleaning and repair can be potential problem areas. Owners and architects should realize that certain treatments or materials may cause or accelerate physical deterioration, including sandblasting, incorrect mortar formulas, and high- pressure water or harsh chemical cleaning.
(L, R) In working on historical buildings, it is also important to know exactly what materials you are dealing with. On the left we see a Neo-Classical bank building in Jackson that combines the use of Indiana limestone and matt-glazed terra cotta so skillfully that it is hard to tell where one material stops and the other begins. On the right is more terra-cotta which closely mimics natural stone. These materials would be cleaned and

repaired using entirely different methods and materials. To do otherwise would cause permanent damage to the building.
(L, R) Windows are another area of concern, because they are usually major character-defining features. The Standards favor repair over replacement whenever possible.
(L, R) Here we see circa 1920 windows in the Clarksdale Railroad Depot that have had a storm window installed on the interior to increase energy efficiency.

(L, R) The Standards do allow for changes to be made to buildings for life safety and accessibility code requirements. On the left we see an unobtrusive ramp constructed to access the front of an antebellum residence in Jackson. On the right to see a limestone-clad stairtower that has been added to a state office building.

(L, R) The Standards also allow sympathetically designed additions to historic buildings. On the left screen you see the Central Fire Station in Vicksburg. The historic portion of the building is on the left, with a gracefully designed addition which uses the same vocabulary of materials and massing tot he right. A narrow glass hyphen connects the old with the new in a unique but respectful manner.

Now I would like to take you through one recent and ongoing case study of a Mississippi Landmark school in Jackson that most of you will recognize.
(L, R) Bailey Magnet School, designed by N. W. Overstreet and Hays Town, is Mississippi's premier example of an Art Deco Style school, and the year it was completed it was honored as the best designed school building in the nation.
(L, R) Highly creative and even playful, Bailey incorporates elements such as this auto porch, and
(L, R) a life-size sculptural group in front of the school auditorium, which
(L, R) features goddesses or muses of drama and music.
(L, R) Even the school mascots stand guard at the entrance to the gymnasium.
(L, R) Several years ago the Jackson Public School System started to comprehensively rehabilitates Bailey in stages, with the end product to be an architecturally distinctive, functionally state-of-the-art facility.
(L, R) One end of the poured- in-place concrete building had dropped 17 inches, the structural repairs were the first order of business. The exterior of the building had innumerable cracks, and special epoxy mixture was custom

formulated to match the color of the concrete. Through the repairs are a bit brighter than the surroundings historic are a bit brighter than the surrounding historic concrete, we expect them to whether out to a nice match over the next few years.

(L, R) The original steel windows were then assessed, and it was found that many had rusted through. It was decided for maintenance reasons that the windows would be replaced with nearly identical aluminum units which would require little if any maintenance and were double-glazed.
(L, R) The latest phases of work involves repairing or replacing both the interior and exterior doors of the school, all of which are highly distinctive.

Lastly, I would like to make some observations on the historic school buildings across the state which are being abandoned at an ever increasing rate.
(L, R) Some are humble architectural significance, such as the old Bentonia School in Yazoo County.
(L, R) Others are more architecturally ambitious and distinctive, including this example in Meridian on the left. On the right is the Old Gulfport High School, designed by N. W. Overstreet. Though the building is in good condition, it most probably will be demolished this year to make way for a new federal courthouse. Efforts to save the building have been stymied by a lack of local support and recognition of the building's statewide importance. Local developers who envisioned adapting the building as a cultural center for the town have been rebuffed.

There is, however, good news in many other parts of the state for abandoned or underutilized school buildings.
(L, R) Perhaps the most high profile in recent years has been the adaptive reuse of Central High School in Jackson as the new home of the State Department of Education.
(L, R) The interior was reworked, providing a handsome lobby which exhibited memorabilia extending back through nearly a century of school life. Courtyards formerly open to the sky were transformed into unique spaces for dining and special events.
(L, R) The old gymnasium, while remaining unchanged on the exterior, had several new floors inserted on the interior to provide more space.
(L, R) Just a few blocks away, Smith Robertson School, seen here on the left, houses Mississippi's finest African-American museum and cultural

center. In Yazoo City the former High School there has been turned into the Triangle Cultural Center, housing theater and a local history museum.

(L, R) Natchez has been particularly successful in adaptively reusing its vacant inner city schools. The old Natchez Institute is home to the Chamber of Commerce and the Historic Natchez Foundation. It may soon take on a third life as part of a new federal court complex.
(L, R) Carpenter School operated as a senior citizen's center.
(L, R) Brumfield School was purchased by a private developer and turned into apartments for single-parent families.
(L, R) The apartments feature 12-foot high stamped metal ceilings and original woodwork.
(L, R) Margaret Martin school now houses a business incubator and is home to the Natchez Opera Festival.
(L, R) Finally, Carr School in Vicksburg, allowed to deteriorate almost beyond the point of saving, recently been purchased by a Pennsylvania developer who will convert it to assisted-living apartments for seniors.

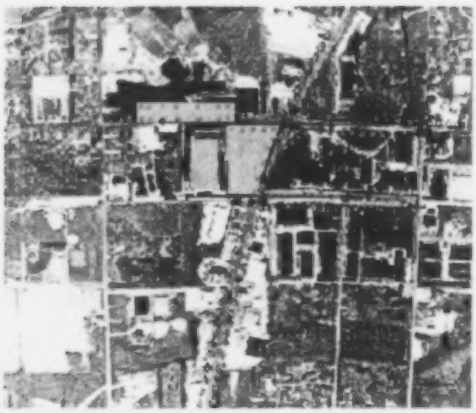
Renovating Landmark Schools

Why renovate?

- Location
- History
- Community

Kate Griffin JHS, Meridian, MS

Location



Booneville, MS: Proposed site plan for linking Booneville HS and Northeast Mississippi Community College. The Small Town Center

- In-town location of landmark school promotes:
  - More opportunity for project-based learning
  - Community use of school facilities and vice versa
  - Visible link between town and school

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History

Milam HS, Tupelo, MS
Elvis went to school here.

- Building symbolizes commitment to a place
- Character of a place

Community

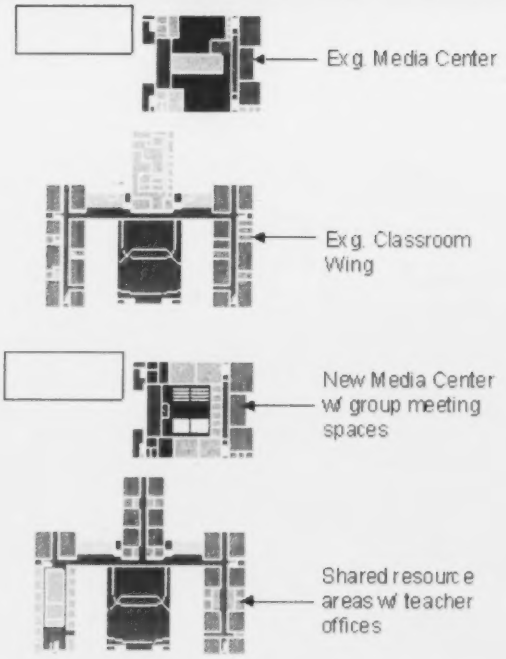
Kate Griffin JHS, Meridian, MS

- Older schools are part of communities
- School becomes a natural meeting place
- School environs affect neighborhood and vice versa

Challenges for Renovation

- New Learning Environments
- New Community Connections
- Technology and Comfort Requirements

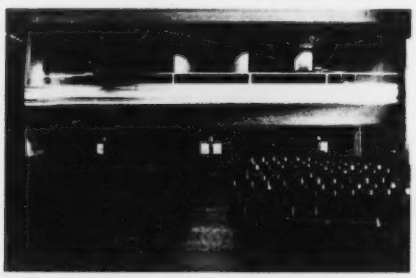
New Learning Environments



- Project-based learning requires:
  - Personal space
  - Shared resource spaces

Meridian HS, Meridian, MS

New Community Services



- Shared facilities
  - Adult education
  - Internships
  - Community services
- Renovation advantage:
  - Significant community facilities exist in older buildings

Greensboro Center, Starkville, MS
Renovation: Shafer/Banner Architects

Technology & Comfort

Computer Teaching Facility
Chestnut Hill College, Philadelphia, PA
Renovation: Kieran Timberlake & Harris

- Room for:
  - Computers & Internet
  - New HVAC systems

Undertaking Renovation

- Requires more survey & testing
- Phasing & disruptions
- Is not necessarily less expensive than new construction

Saltillo Elementary School, Saltillo, MS
Renovation: Johnson Bailey Henderson McNeel Arch.

Landmark Schools & Learning Communities

- Schools are a piece of community 'glue'
- Learning becomes community-wide

Landmark Schools & Learning Communities

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